

Commission to Study the Scope and Quality of Citizenship Education

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Meeting Summary

Members present: Sen. Neria Douglas (co-chair), Rep. Glenn Cummings (co-chair), Rep. Gerald Davis, Gale Caddoo, Chris Hall, Judith Harvey, Richard Marchi, Denise O'Toole, Patrick Phillips, Joseph Burnham, Amanda Coffin, Kurt Hoffman, Liz McCabe Park, Fran Rudoff

Members absent: Sen. Betty Lou Mitchell

Members present: Phillip D. McCarthy, Ed.D., Legislative Analyst and Nicole Dube, Legislative Analyst

I. Introductions

Sen. Douglas convened the Commission meeting and asked Commission members to introduce themselves and make introductory remarks. Following introductions, staff reviewed the duties and presented the proposed work plan with the Commission.

II. Citizenship Brainstorm

Fran Rudoff introduced a group exercise that asked Commission members to brainstorm the qualities of an effective citizen. Commission members divided into three groups and created lists containing the 1) knowledge and cognitive thinking skills, 2) behavior/actions and participatory skills and 3) the attitudes/beliefs of an effective citizen. After completing the exercise Commission members discussed how the exercise enhanced their understanding of effective citizenship and the implications of this understanding for the Commission's work.

Main points raised during the discussion:

- ⊕ While society and schools may have once intentionally supported and addressed civic education, its role today seems immense and overwhelming;
- ⊕ Today, some of our youth have the attitude that they cannot make a difference and that the system does not support or understand their beliefs;
- ⊕ Civic engagement is hindered by the disenchantment and discouragement of/from power structure and government;
- ⊕ Student involvement may be disenfranchised when some status is connected to student leadership opportunities;
- ⊕ School environment needs to respect to student opinion and engage their participation
- ⊕ We need to acknowledge that there are a number of people for whom the system does not work and we need consider this disengaged population as we move forward;
- ⊕ The focus on state and national performance standards does not create an environment conducive to youth participation;

- ⊕ There are core skills that kids need to know including problem solving, critical thinking and the ability to get along with others;
- ⊕ Civic education is not only about knowledge, skills and curriculum -- participation is central; There is an opportunity to redefine civic education into active participation; and
- ⊕ Citizenship education is a shared responsibility -- we need to look beyond schools and acknowledge and identify other opportunities for agencies to engage kids.

Questions asked by Commission members:

- ⊕ How do you define an active citizen?
- ⊕ How do we define a fundamentally civically literate person?
- ⊕ What socio-cultural factors prevent youth participation?
- ⊕ What are some alternative ways to engage students?

III. National Perspectives on Citizenship Education – Patrick Phillips

Patrick Phillips briefed the Commission on national efforts to address citizenship education. Mr. Phillips attended the first congressional conference on civic education in Washington D.C. in October as part of the Maine delegation (along with Julia Underwood, Maine Law School; Crystal Ward, Lewiston teacher; Rick Lyons, superintendent). Each delegation was asked to develop a state action plan on civic education and report back annually. The goal of the conference is to allow states to define a vision, identify and share resources, build capacity and develop state action plans.

Mr. Phillips indicated that the Maine action plan could serve as a resource to the Commission, and that the Maine delegation agreed to defer to the Commission to define civic education goals. He added that the goals should focus on engagement rather than knowledge and skills and stressed the importance of focusing on identifying ways to work across schools, as well as various levels and branches of governments to share the responsibility of civic education.

IV. K-12 Perspectives on Citizenship Education – Fran Rudoff

Ms. Rudoff's presentation included a summary of data from "The Civic Mission of Schools" Carnegie/CIRCLE report regarding civic education, youth idealism, and youth engagement. (See purple hard copy of presentation handout) Ms. Rudoff noted that while more young people are involved in community service and volunteering, young people are increasingly disengaged from politics, government and current events. Ms Rudoff also briefed the Commission on survey data from KIDS Speak, regarding students' service learning experiences at middle schools in Maine. (See purple hard copy of presentation handout) Overall, students and teachers find service learning increases students' problem solving skills, social competence, pride in work, and positive attitudes toward school and community.

In addition, Ms Rudoff also presented potential questions for a K-12 Civic Education Survey to be sent electronically from the Maine Department of Education to superintendents. The goal of the survey is to gauge the scope of current civic education activities in Maine schools.

V. Higher Ed Perspectives on Citizenship Education – Liz McCabe Park

Liz McCabe Park briefed the Commission on civic involvement among higher education students. Data presented included national statistics on attitudes, political participation and service learning involvement among college students. (See yellow copy of presentation handout). National data indicates that students are more disengaged from politics and civic participation than in past decades. Ms McCabe Park noted that students do not see politics as a primary means of bringing about positive change nor do they see voting as a responsibility or duty.

National data also indicates that service learning increases the sense of civic responsibility and personal effectiveness among higher education faculty and students. The percentage of Maine campuses with community service offices is comparable to the national average, however Maine falls far below the national average in terms of the percentage of community service offices with a full time staff member.

VI. Maine State Government Civic Education Initiatives -- Panel Presentation & Discussion

Dan Gwadosky, Secretary of State, presented an overview of the Department of the Secretary of State's Fostering Youth Involvement ("FYI") Initiatives -- including mock elections, voter registration, essay contests related to Maine history and our Constitution, and recognition for outstanding citizenship have engaged 33,346 students in Maine K-12 schools (from 1992 to 2002). (See blue and white copies of presentation handout).

Nancy Connolly, Staff Person to the Legislative Youth Advisory Council and Coordinator, Youth Development Unit, Muskie School of Public Service provide an overview of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council. The Council was established by state government in 2001 and is comprised of 18 high school and college students from across the state and is authorized to address policy issues affecting youth. In the year or so that it has been in operation, the Council has addressed policy issues related to alcohol and substance abuse, curricular and co-curricular aspects of Maine schools and driver education policies and practices.

Tom Harnett, Assistant Attorney General and Director of the Civil Rights Team Project, presented an overview of the Department of the Attorney General's Civil Rights Team Project. Civil Rights Teams are school-based prevention programs that combat hate violence, prejudice, harassment and bias in our schools. Students, faculty members and community advisors collaborate to create a safer environment for all students and to reduce intolerance and build an understanding of civil rights. The Project has grown from 18 middle and high schools in 1996 to more than 194 schools, including 11 elementary schools, in 2003. (See white copies of presentation handout).

Maryalice Crofton, Director, The Maine Commission for Community Service and Team Leader for the Community Service Team in the State Planning Office, presented an overview of the Commission. The Maine Commission for Community Service was established in 1994, serves as the lead partner with the Federal Corporation for National and Community Service and is comprised of 26 citizens who develop and implement Maine's vision for volunteer service. Ms. Crofton highlighted the 2002 annual report of the commission and described the civic

engagement, community building and social capital initiatives of the Commission, including the Citizen Corps and the opportunities for volunteer service available in Maine through the AmeriCorp and VISTA programs. Ms. Crofton also indicated that there are various perspectives on what constitutes community service and service-learning and that navigating the waters of these multiple perspectives were challenges that needed to be addressed in attempting to coordinate state policies and programs.

Nancy Anderson, Executive Director, The Maine Mentoring Partnership, presented an overview of the Maine Mentoring Partnership. The Partnership has identified over 120 mentor programs statewide. Ms. Anderson reported that there are currently 6,000 youth engaged in one-to-one mentoring matches and 10,000 youth engaged in group mentoring matches; but, that over 2,000 youth are on waiting lists for mentors.

VII. Scoping Out Key Policy Issues and Developing a Work Plan -- Commission Discussion

Commission members discussed their perspectives on the purpose, key policy issues and expected outcomes of the study.

Main points raised during the discussion:

- ⊕ Commission should define problem situations and prioritize the most pressing issues, selecting certain ones to focus on and then identifying which problems/issues are ripe for public policymakers to address and which could be marginally or significantly resolved through public policies;
- ⊕ Might our recommendations list documents that our youth should read, for example, the Declaration of Independence, U. S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc.?
- ⊕ A survey of school-based initiatives and a critical review of Maine Learning Results standards and content areas regarding civics and government could yield useful information for the Commission;
- ⊕ A focus on engagement is critical since it is more important to learn what works, not just what is going on in our schools and across the State;
- ⊕ We have two missions and must focus on two different groups of youth, those who are engaged and those who don't care to be engaged;
- ⊕ We should focus on what information, resources and tools we need to provide to our youth to give them the opportunity to become informed and engaged citizens; and
- ⊕ We need to learn the "mosaic" in our schools and communities (i.e., the opportunities provided related to student safety, respect, empowerment, mentors, volunteer and service learning programs).

Commission members discussed the resource people and information needed to examine the key policy issues of the study.

Main points raised during the discussion:

- ⊕ We should access any data on student participation;
- ⊕ Education Commission of the States will soon release a policy scan from the states; let's plan to distribute this report to Commission members before the next meeting;

- ⊕ The education survey draft needs to be revised and should be edited so that over-burdened school officials will find it to be an easy task to complete
- ⊕ We should also consider conducting a survey of higher education institutions; and also look to the most recent Maine Campus compact survey for data on Maine campuses; and
- ⊕ Information on educator preparation programs and in-service professional development opportunities can be found by contacting Harry Osgood with the Maine Department of Education or via Campus Compact coordinators at each campus.

Commission members discussed issues related to logistics -- meeting schedule, how best to arrive at findings, conclusion and recommendations, etc.

Main points raised during the discussion:

- ⊕ After discussing the impossible short amount of time in which to address the duties in this study, Commission members voted unanimously to request an extension until the end of January, 2004 to complete the study;
- ⊕ Commission members also voted unanimously to request that Commission staff file a request for a bill to implement the recommendations of the Commission with the Revisor of Statutes; and
- ⊕ Commission members scheduled the next Commission meeting for Wednesday, December 3, 2003 from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm in the State House.

VIII. Adjournment

The Commission meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip D. McCarthy, Ed.D., Legislative Analyst
Nicole Dube, Legislative Analyst